

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

December 3, 2002

7:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman DeVries.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Guinta, Sysyn, Osborne, Pinard, O’Neil,
Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Smith, Thibault and Forest

Absent: Alderman Garrity

Mayor Baines advised that the purpose of the special meeting was to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Baines requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Jeff Kassell, 22 Appleton Street, Manchester stated:

I am Chairman of COMP, Citizens Opposed to Multi-Million Dollar Projects. I came here again as I did last time to complain about the \$25 million baseball stadium that is proposed. I would like to note that confidence in numbers that are published in the United States is falling pretty fast with the demise of companies like Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing and all the rest and nobody believes the numbers anymore. We had a recent article published a week or so ago in the *Union Leader* indicating that on average 8,200 people go to hockey games for the Monarchs. Here is a picture of the Monarchs at a hockey game. They are playing St. Johns. I have a lot more pictures like this. I apologize it is not that clear. This was a picture from a video camera that panned the audience. I can’t give you the exact number but I will tell you that 70% of these seats are empty. Maybe it was a bad night. I can’t speak for that. This is not my video camera. I wasn’t the one who went. You people seem determined to build this stadium and voted 12-1. I think it is a mistake. It is pretty lonely up here complaining about it. There are not too many people supporting me but I am continuing to poll. I have now polled 52 people at the whirlpool in the Y. Now 50 people

said they don't want the stadium, 2 people are on the fence. They said that they had mixed feelings about it.

Mayor Baines asked were they all in the whirlpool at the same time.

Mr. Kassel answered no they were not and that is the other thing I wanted to mention. I am glad you interrupted me about that because this is not a personal fight. I like Bob Baines a lot. I think Bob Baines is an extraordinarily smart guy and he is hilarious. He is one of the funniest guys I know but this isn't about anybody's personality. This is about money and how it is going to be distributed. We have one of the most spectacular valuable pieces of land that is going to be virtually given free to a developer. Now that land can be used for a lot of things. You want to sell that land to a developer, get somebody like Tamposi or Stabile to come in here and build luxury apartments that are 20 stories high and sell them over 10 years to people who are affluent enough to afford them. Now that would be a tax base but to give this land away for free and build on top of it, build a \$25 million baseball stadium at taxpayer expense is just plain wrong. That is public land and it really shouldn't be used for that purpose. I want to close tonight by saying that when the Alderman decided and the previous Mayor decided to build that civic center they told us that Manchester was a hockey town and that is why it is going to succeed. I suppose now that they want to build a \$25 million baseball stadium it is because Manchester is a baseball town too. Well, on Bridge and Elm some City money is in a private project for apartments that are going to cost \$1,500 to \$1,700/month per unit and I don't think that project is going to fly either. Instead of building that, if that project falls apart, why don't you build a bowling emporium nine stories high because Manchester probably could be a bowling town as well and you could spend another \$20 million on that. This stadium is risky because we have never had a baseball team stay here in Manchester. They leave in a year or two. I have been here a long time. My taxes started off at \$730 a year in 1977 and now they are \$4,000 and I think everybody can relate to that. That is a 500% increase. You can put as much lipstick on this pig as you want. It is still not going to fly. This baseball stadium is a bad idea.

Geoff Ashman, 25 Maybrook Avenue, Manchester stated:

I would just like to share some comments about an issue that you folks will be talking about later regarding the disposition of the Brown School on Amory Street in West Manchester. Families in Transition have requested to purchase this to develop the Brown School, which has been dormant for 20 years and convert it into affordable housing. I just wanted to share...I observed a similar type of decision made a couple of years ago and I just want to share how I came to a decision to help you make a decision later on tonight. When I first moved to Manchester 17 years ago I was fortunate enough to be able to buy a three-bedroom house and live in it by myself. Within a couple of years, though, I learned of a very dramatic need for housing for people with disabilities so I had to weigh the resources versus the need. I had a surplus room in my home and there was a tremendous need so I decided to be a good citizen and use these resources wisely and opened my home up to these two men and I have

to tell you it is the best decision I have ever made and it has worked out extraordinarily well. Later tonight you folks will have the same privilege to make that kind of decision. We have this surplus resource, the Brown School, and there is a tremendous need for affordable housing in all of Manchester, especially the West Side. We are not talking about clearing trees or worrying about wetlands or anything, this is a school that has been boarded up for 20 years. I drive by it several times every day and it is just so sad that that resource is there. Whenever I think we apply resources, especially when it is a surplus resource, to a very, very desperate need, only good things can happen.

Billy Dodd, 181 Mammoth Road, Manchester stated:

I want to start where I finished a couple of weeks ago – a puff of smoke. Mr. Baines you stated that the riverfront and ballpark development would help stabilize the tax rate but unfortunately I think it is a little bit of blowing smoke at the residents of Manchester. In about five years the ballpark will be a couple of years old and the civic center will be about seven and we are still going to have a tax increase. Be honest with everybody. Scrambled eggs. MOU's. It is the same thing. I was talking with one of the Aldermen the other night and found out that the MOU's for the ballpark and related development you guys received in your packets on a Friday night four days before you voted on a Tuesday. Mr. Baines, you are the CEO of this company, Manchester. Myself and the rest of the taxpayers are stockholders. I think you should have done more. Did the City Solicitor, the Finance Officer or anybody else sit down with all 14 Aldermen and yourself and go over the MOU's before you ever voted on that Tuesday night? I think if you look at each other the answer is going to be no but I guarantee you the other side had many meetings. They probably even crafted those MOU's. You should have done more to look at those things before you voted on them. French Hall. There was a neat thing in the paper. You guys want to sell it. You are bordering a lot of houses and apartments up on Hackett Hill. It seems the City has the idea that for every job they create in the City every square inch of space has to be built on with a bedroom. How many more kids will Northwest Elementary School hold? French Hall is a building. It is not the core facility but you could add the rest of the core facility to that and turn it into an elementary school. I implore upon this Board not to sell that building. Hold on to it for future development. You can't add many more portables. The other side was much better prepared on those MOU's and before this Board votes on any of the contracts the final period should be in place when it comes to you. Thank you.

Kathy Philbert, 176 Laurel Street, Manchester stated:

As some of you may remember for many years my neighbors worked very hard to clean up the crime in our area. Many volunteer hours were spent to organize crime watches and raise money and support for community policing, serve on the MNHS Board, testify at hearings in Concord, etc. with many positive results. The drug deals and prostitutes are nowhere near as blatant on our block. Of course they are a few blocks away and the Police Department is working hard to get them out of the City. About nine months ago, mid-March, our block began its scheduled improvements and the emphasis is definitely intended on that word

improvements. The narrowing of our street has already caused havoc, not to mention the road rage that we deal with and the numerous close calls for head-on accidents at the corners. About 10 years ago I spent several days at the Police Department taking a course from St. Louis University. The one thing I took away from there that I will never forget is how important the proper street lighting is to prevent crime. Well, nine months later Laurel Street still has no streetlights. Vandalism has increased and along with that vandalism are the broken horses that are protecting or were meant to protect the areas that the streetlights are supposed to be attached to. I spoke to Alderman Sysyn on Monday only to hear that these lights are still on back order. Well this is no way to run the City. I am sure that not one of you would wait nine months for an every day product to be put in your home. I think that the Aldermen and the Mayor have to take responsibility to insure that every contract that is signed by this City insures that not only quality products but delivery of that product in a timely fashion is part of every contract. Thank you.

Phoebe Stone, 224 Frederick Street, Manchester stated:

I am here to speak on behalf of the Brown School conversion project. I volunteered with the Woman's Crisis Service and it was through them that I learned about the work that the Families in Transition organization does in helping these women get back on their feet and become wage earners and taxpayers and responsible parents in this City. Everything is there. We have the building. We have the people who need it and we have the money to fund it. Amazing. There are few things that Manchester needs more than affordable housing and senior housing. We have already done similar conversions of other schools and it has worked well and we found out all of the things we need to know about it. Another thing that is bad for a neighborhood is having a boarded up derelict building, which they have had for 20 years. Here is an opportunity to put this back to productive use. The location for this is very suitable. It is a neighborhood of apartment houses. It would fit right in. This project requires very fast action and I hope that we won't let this opportunity slip by. Thank you.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business was presented and on motion of Alderman Smith, duly seconded by Alderman Shea, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk